

# New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

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*Chair: Peter Burling*

*Vice Chair: Katherine Hersh*

**Meeting Notes: September 25, 2009, 10:00 am  
Legislative Office Building Room 201**

## **No Quorum – Meeting Notes**

Attendance: Kathy Hersh, Nancy Larson, Ryan Phinney for Sen. Fuller–Clark, Michael King, Representative Keans, Nick Coates for Mike Tardiff, Jay Minkarah, Kerrie Diers, David Preece, Tim Moore, Malcolm Taylor, Kit Morgan, Mark Brewer, Representative Allen

**I. Call to Order** – Kathy Hersh called the meeting to order at 10:09 am

**II. Public Input –**

Barbara Pressley – Asked that subcommittees be posted; Kathy responded that when she is notified of a subcommittee meeting, she sends it to both the NHRTA and the NHRTA CC list, which gets it posted on the NHDOT website.

Tom Nowell – Asked about the status of the earmark for the \$1.9 mil from Paul Hodes (see Kit Morgan’s answer further in the minutes)

Don Armstrong – Henniker, provided info about rail publications

**III. Minutes – August 14, 2009 – *Postponed due to lack of quorum***

**IV. Update on Grant Process**

Kit Morgan updated the group on the application due Oct 2. The consultant has been working with NH DOT and Mike Izbicki on the application which entails extensive attachments. NH DOT is the applicant. Expect to find out in December to see if we were successful on the first application.

Rep. Keans asked if there is an issue with FRA being short staffed. Kit Morgan stated that FRA staff has met with NH on its application. Track 1 applications have priority for FRA. Track 2 is a corridor program that includes planning and acquisition that may take a little longer to review.

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Rep Keans asked about acquisition. Will there need to be legislation? Not sure what the process might be at this point for acquisition.

Tom Irwin asked if the Track 2 will be couched in terms of the project with respect to the Boston – Montreal corridor project. Kit answered in the affirmative.

Kit Morgan – \$1.9 mil earmark was for alternatives analysis as part of the commuter rail program. We need to find out the resolution of FRA funds first, and secondly there is an issue of the availability of the 20% match. It is limited to commuter rail, but would evaluate alternatives before moving on to environmental.

## **V. Committee updates**

- a. Public relations committee – one application has been received to date for the logo contest. Deadline is Sept. 30. Channel 4 has a piece that includes the Boston – Concord line.
- b. Master planning committee (not an official committee at this time) – Tim Moore distributed the draft letter to the RPCs for discussion.

Nick Coates asked if this would be an official DOT document. This would be a NHRTA document. We should compile info from NHDOT as well – some of this might be duplicative of efforts already in place.

Kit Morgan stated that NH does have a rail plan that was completed in 2001. This needs to be updated to obtain FRA funding to update the plan to meet the current requirements of the law. The funding currently in place is not sufficient to complete the plan.

Michael King suggested that the NHRTA might be able to use the NH DOT plan as our plan. Kit Morgan stated that it certainly would be comprehensive.

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Kathy Hersh stated that we can also ask the RPCs to update us on what is going on in each region. David Preece requested a copy of the current rail plan. Kit Morgan stated that it is on the NH DOT rail website.

Nancy Larson remarked that this is the first step big picture effort. GIS mapping of corridors should be relatively easy: active corridors and corridors for potential back on line. Can we have the RPCs present on that and have a good visual understanding of the corridor?

Kit Morgan offered DOT's rail corridor map which shows most of the corridors that have been gps'd as well.

Nancy suggested, if RPCs could assess the status of their regions based on the DOT map, that would be a good start.

Malcolm Taylor stated that the Lakes Region TAC addresses rail at each meeting and wondered if other RPC TACs do this as well.

David Preece answered that rail is addressed as needed at the TAC level.

Kerrie Diers offered to start as a GIS exercise.

Michael King clarified that we need to set some parameters around what we are trying to do. Transit is different than freight. We should be focused on rail transit which is in line with our mission. We could address all rail if we were a Rail Authority.

Kathy Hersh asked that we articulate the purpose for this effort.

Mark Brewer stated the need to focus on the economic impact of rail. If this isn't addressed by the state rail plan, this is something we should focus on. It is clear that we need to find support for rail as the fare box will not cover the operating costs and support needs to come from elsewhere.

Kathy asked what are the next steps?

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David Preece stated that we need to review the current state rail plan and for Kit to update us on what the current federal regulations are for rail master plans and what additional work is needed to update the plan to current federal regulations. Kit agreed to do that at our next meeting

### Public comment:

Representative from Southern NH railroad: There is freight on almost all rail in state. That needs to be considered

James Vayo – Nashua, the amount of data requested is a lot. Need to define the format of the data and specific types of data

Tom Irwin – CLF, regarding outreach – copy Ken Niemzyck has a lot of information on rail. State rail plan is essential. It is troubling that we don't have enough funding to pay the consultant. Is there a role the NHRTA can play in securing the funding as this is essential.

Kathy thanked the audience for staying on topic and being brief as this is normally not the time for public comment but in light of the conversation welcomes the brief public comments.

Don Armstrong – TIFs are the way that rail is funded in VA.

David Preece – Commissioner Campbell is looking into alternative funding sources such as this.

Kathy Hersh – there is a limitation to the use of TIFs for capital and not a secure funding mechanism. They have a short shelf life.

Jay Minkarah – TIFs are a diversion of tax funds from local taxes

Rep Keans – we should monitor legislation that is being proposed. Neal Kurk is looking at proposing legislation to prevent DOT employees from providing time to the NHRTA.

Is there a role for NHRTA to play in the GACIT hearings?

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David Preece – This is an opportunity to express support for the rail project. The hearings in the southern part of the state this is a priority.

Malcom Taylor provided testimony at the GACIT hearings. We need to remind the council that they are to address “intermodal transit.” Mark Brewer supported this.

This is the forum where we can be most effective.

Tim Moore – Oct 1 is the GACIT hearing in Plaistow. Once we have a list of the bill numbers, it is easy to find out when the hearings are. This won’t come up until January.

Nick Coates – should the public relations committee develop talking points? Kathy is developing a power point presentation that can be posted on the website.

## **VI. Other discussion**

Next meeting:

- Need to create the Master Planning committee as a standing committee update on the State Rail Plan. We should review this on-line. Keep in mind that the federal requirements have changed.
- Legislative update as a standing agenda item
- Status of the resolution introduced at the last meeting for the special session on October 28.
- Press conference with the Governor.

## **VIII. The meeting ended at 11:20 am.**

Respectfully submitted,

Kerrie Diers